

SEATTLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

YOUR GUIDE TO
PERSONAL
SAFETY



POLICE HEADQUARTERS
610 FIFTH AVENUE, SEATTLE WASHINGTON 98124

OUR MISSION

The Mission of the Seattle Police Department is to prevent crime, enforce the law and support quality public safety by delivering respectful, professional and dependable police services.

PRECINCT LOCATIONS



Seattle Police Headquarters
610 5th Avenue
Seattle, WA 98124



East Precinct
1519 12th Ave.
Seattle, WA 98122



North Precinct
10049 College Way N.
Seattle, WA 98133



South Precinct
3001 S. Myrtle
Seattle, WA 98108



Southwest Precinct
2300 SW Webster
Seattle, WA 98106



West Precinct
810 Virginia St.
Seattle, WA 98101

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For additional copies, contact your local police precinct or
the Seattle Neighborhood Group at (206) 323-9666.

FACTS ABOUT CRIME AND PREVENTION

Never before has so much information been available to people through so many different types of media. When so much of the news today is about crime, especially violent crime, it is hard not to fear for yourself and the safety of your loved ones. The truth is that in the last ten years alone, violent crimes in Seattle have gone from 7,449 annually (1993) to 4,093 (in 2002). Murders in 2001 and 2002 were at a 40 year low. In fact, the average person is quite unlikely to ever become a victim of violent crime.

Regardless of what statistics show, if you *feel* vulnerable to crime it can greatly impact your sense of security and willingness to move about freely. Practicing some simple prevention techniques can reduce your chances of becoming a victim and enhance your general feelings of safety.

In the coming pages, you will learn some techniques to increase your personal safety. Some will seem like common sense, some will be ideas you may not have thought of before, and some might even seem a bit silly. Choose to adopt the ideas that seem right for you, but please do read and consider all of them. Most importantly, remember that all of the crime prevention techniques in the world are nothing compared to your own gut instincts. Your gut is usually right, and even if it is occasionally wrong, a moment of embarrassment is far less important than your overall safety.

We all have images in our minds of what a “victim” looks like, what a “bad guy” looks like, and what a “safe” neighborhood looks like. It is important to remember while reviewing all of this information that a victim can be anyone, old or young, male or female. “Bad guys” can be female as well, and they can also be young or old. Some act in aggressive or suspicious ways, others don’t. Crime can happen in any neighborhood, in the middle of the day as well as at night. Now, this is not meant to make you fearful of everything all of the time! It is simply meant to back up your gut instincts . . . don’t ignore a situation that feels wrong just because in your mind it “looks okay.”

Trusting your own instincts that a situation feels unusual can be the best personal safety tool you have . . . pay attention to it!

SAFETY ON THE STREET

- Pay close attention to your surroundings, avoid “automatic pilot”.
- Walk with a purpose; project an assertive, business-like image.
- Use common sense; plan your route to avoid uninhabited parks, parking lots, garages and alleyways; stick to well lit areas.
- Develop a plan before you see trouble. Crossing a street or entering a store may get you out of a potentially bad situation.
- If a car follows you or beckons you while you are walking, do not approach it; instead, turn and quickly walk the *opposite* direction.
- Watch your body space; don't let people get too close, even if they appear to have a reason, like asking for the time, change, etc.
- Consider wearing clothing and shoes that you can move freely and quickly in, especially when walking or waiting for the bus.
- Carry minimal items; overloading yourself can make you appear vulnerable.

SAFETY IN YOUR CAR

- Have your keys in hand as you leave the building.
- Parked cars provide good hiding places (inside and out), be alert when approaching your car.
- Back off if you see anyone loitering near your car.
- Enter your car quickly and lock the door immediately.
- If followed, drive to a public place and honk to attract attention.
- If you need to pay for parking, ready your money inside the locked car.
- Always leave your car locked and empty of possessions, even small change.

SAFETY ON THE BUS

- Use schedules to minimize time waiting at bus stops.
- Sit near the front of the bus if possible.
- Keep possessions in your lap.
- Pay attention to surroundings; if you feel bothered, tell the driver.
- Avoid sleeping, cleaning out your purse or pockets, balancing your check book, etc. If you read, look up periodically.

IF YOU ARE CONFRONTED

- It may seem like a good idea to tell a robber that you have no money, but this technique may actually backfire. It is safer to give up a few dollars. Carry a little money separate from your other funds in an accessible place.
- If someone demands your property and displays or implies in any way that they have a weapon, don't resist. If you do, chances are you will be knocked down, hit, or kicked and the robber will get your property anyway.
- If someone tries to grab you, make a scene. Scream, kick, fight . . . do what you can to get away and attract attention.

PURSE & WALLET THEFT PREVENTION

Unfortunately, there is no style of handbag or wallet that cannot be taken. There is no foolproof way to carry possessions. If the robber wants your valuables, chances are he/she will get them. However, there are good strategies to reduce your risks:

MINIMIZE WHAT CAN BE LOST

- Carry only what you actually need.
- Carry only small amounts of cash.
- Carry only the credit cards you actually plan to use.
- Leave expensive jewelry at home.
- Try not to carry *anything* that is irreplaceable or of sentimental value. Losing family photos, address books, and important papers is usually more traumatic to victims than the actual financial loss.

CARRYING VALUABLES SAFELY:

- Handbags should be closed, carried in front of the body with an arm held loosely across it. A bag dangling by your side is much easier for a thief to grab.
- If wearing a handbag with a strap over the head, choose a thin strap, and wear it under your coat. This makes it harder for the robber to grab the strap. A hard yank on a thick strap may cause a fall and an injury.
- Many women find they don't need to carry a handbag all the time.
- Place essentials (keys, small amount of cash, I.D.) in a pocket.
- Since your address is usually on a card or document in your bag, avoid carrying your house keys in the same place. Instead, carry keys in a pocket.
- Make sure the clasp or zipper on your bag is closed, especially in crowds.
- If you *must* carry a large amount of cash or valuable items, do not carry them in your handbag or wallet. Carry valuables in an inside pocket.

WHAT THIEVES LOOK FOR:

- Items left in cars, grocery carts, dressing rooms or desks. It takes only seconds to grab your property and get away.
- Wallets and checkbooks that protrude from pockets.
- The noise and confusion of crowds to help conceal their crimes. Be especially cautious in busy stores, shopping districts, at public events, on buses, and at bus stops.
- Distraction. Pickpockets often work in teams; one might bump, shove, drop something, or ask you a question, while another steals wallets from pockets or handbags.

IDENTITY THEFT PREVENTION

Identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes in America. It can occur when a criminal steals personal identifying information such as name, birthdate, Social Security number or your mother's maiden name and uses it for their own gain. These thefts can occur through lost or stolen credit or debit cards, non-secure online transactions, personal information recovered from your garbage, and most frequently, stolen mail from your mailbox.

BASIC SAFETY TIPS

- Don't carry important numbers or passwords with you.
- Memorize your Social Security number.
- Don't use your date of birth as your password.
- Never leave receipts behind.

CREDIT/DEBIT CARDS

- Sign your new credit cards immediately.
- Report lost or stolen credit cards immediately. Make sure you keep the numbers of the issuers somewhere besides on the back of your card!
- Always check your monthly financial statements carefully against your receipts.
- Review your consumer credit report annually.

MAIL

- Don't leave mail in your mailbox for more than a day. If you are gone, arrange to have a trusted neighbor or friend pick up your mail.
- Double check that mailboxes are official US Postal Service collection boxes before you deposit your mail.
- Shred or tear up all unnecessary documents that have your personal information on them.

ONLINE

- Never put in a credit or debit card number through a website unless it offers a secure transaction.
- A secure transaction will have a "padlock" icon at the bottom strip of the web page. Also, the URL address will change from "http" to "https" on the page where you input personal data.

WHAT CAN YOU DO IF YOU BECOME A VICTIM?

As soon as you discover your identity is being used, you can begin to fight back to lessen the damage the criminal can do. This is why checking your financial statements frequently and carefully can be your best first step towards discovering an ID theft.

... IDENTITY THEFT PREVENTION

REPORT THE CRIME

Call the Police: To report a physical theft of your belongings, or a robbery. If immediate danger is over, you can make a report to the Seattle Police non-emergency line:

(206) 625-5011

Call the U.S. Postal Inspection Service office: If the crime involved U.S. mail.

(206) 442-6300

Call the U.S. Secret Service: If the crime involved counterfeit credit cards or computer hacking. (206)220-6800

Call the issuing credit card company: if the crime involved credit card fraud.

OTHER STEPS YOU CAN TAKE

Call the Federal Trade Commission 1-877-IDTHEFT: For counseling and help to resolve problems arising from this crime.

Call one of the major credit reporting agencies (Equifax, Experian, or TransUnion): to see if any new accounts were opened in your name without your consent. You can place a “fraud alert” on your file.

Keep a record: When you start calling agencies to report your case, keep a record of the names and phone numbers of the people you talked to, along with any supporting documentation.

ATM SAFETY TIPS

- Utilize an ATM located inside an open business whenever possible.
- Avoid using street ATMs during night time hours.
- Always be aware of suspicious persons or vehicles in the area of the ATM.
- Trust your gut feeling. If things don't feel right, avoid that ATM.
- Have your ATM card out before approaching the ATM.
- Don't write your ATM personal identification number on your card or keep the number in your wallet.
- When entering your personal identification number, try to keep the numbers from the view of others.
- Don't withdraw large amounts of cash. Secure your money at the ATM.
- Don't walk away with money in hand. Always take your receipt with you.
- If a robber demands your money, don't argue or fight. Note the robber's description and give the robber the money. Get away as soon as it is safe to do so. Your safety is more important than your money.
- Report all robberies to police as soon as possible by calling 911.

HANDGUN SAFETY & STORAGE

- Every gun owner should carefully consider the reasons for having a gun. If there is no compelling need to own a gun, consider removing it from your home. A gun increases, not decreases, the danger to your family.
- If you own firearms, carefully consider where to keep them. Hall closets, nightstands, drawers by the outside doors of your home and other traditional places are often where criminals, and curious children, look first.
- Store guns unloaded, locked up and with a lock on the trigger. Consider a lock box for handguns. Store ammunition separately – and locked up.
- If you or a family member are experiencing high levels of anger, fear or depression, remove guns from your home. It is during these times a gun is often used against a loved one or against oneself.
- Never handle a gun when under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Never leave a gun in your vehicle. Guns are often stolen from cars.
- Teach children never to touch a firearm without supervision, and to immediately tell an adult if they find a gun.
- You are responsible for how your guns are stored and used. Know where your firearms are at all times.
- All gun owners should receive training in the safe handling and care of their guns and ammunition.

FOUND GUNS

Report found guns immediately to 9-1-1 for pick-up. Outside Seattle, call your local police or sheriff's department.

UNWANTED GUNS

In Seattle, you can take your unwanted, unloaded guns, in a clear plastic bag, to the nearest police precinct for safe – and final – disposal. You can also call the police non-emergency number at (206) 625-5011 for pick-up of unwanted, unloaded guns.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF . . .

I'M EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC ABUSE?

Domestic violence is usually perceived as violence against women by men. While this is still the majority of the type of cases reported, more and more cases are being reported by male victims against female abusers and by same-sex partners. Batterers and victims come from all ethnic backgrounds, socioeconomic classes, ages, and religious affiliations. Abuse also comes in many different forms beyond hitting. Verbal insults and threats, physical restraint without hitting and threats and manipulation can all be forms of domestic abuse. Does your partner:

- Insult you in public or private?
- Check up on you, asking where you have been or who you've talked to?
- Put limitations on where you go, what you do, or what you spend?
- Say you "made them" get violent, or otherwise blame you for their actions?
- Always make negative comments about your friends or family?
- Threaten to hurt you, your family, or your pets?
- Tell you their jealousy is a sign of their love?
- Destroy your things?
- Touch you or make you have sex in ways that hurt or scare you?

These are all signs that you may be in an abusive relationship.

HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF?

Even if you feel you cannot control your current situation, the following are the powers you DO have to protect yourself, your children, and your money:

- **If you are in immediate danger, call 9-1-1.**
- Tell others you trust how they can help you to stay safe.
- Teach your children and safe friends a code word that signals that you are in danger.
- Designate a home of a friend (or a friend of a friend) that your partner does not know about as safe housing.
- If you are thinking about leaving, put important documents (such as birth certificates, children's immunization records, lease, passport, green card, social security card...) in a safe place.
- If you decide to leave, important things to pack are car keys, identification, important documents, passport, money, checkbook and credit cards, extra clothes, personal phone book and medications. If you have a children, also bring their favorite toys.
- To protect yourself at work, take an alternate route. Also tell trusted coworkers about your situation, bring a photo of the abuser to work, and have a coworker screen your calls.
- **Take care of yourself!** Eat well, get enough sleep and avoid drugs and alcohol. You deserve the right to feel safe, and need to put yourself first.

I THINK I'M BEING STALKED?

Stalking is defined as the intentional, unlawful and repeated harassment and/or following of a person, which causes that person to be in **reasonable fear that he/she may be injured**. Stalking may start out with repeated unwanted contacts, including calls, visits, and gifts. Stalking may include harassment, threats, or obscenity – in person, by phone, via the internet, or in writing. Stalking may escalate quickly and without provocation or encouragement by the victim. A small percentage of stalkers follow celebrities or strangers, but the majority stalk someone with whom they have had a past or present relationship. If you think you are being stalked:

- Report the activity to the police.
- Send a clear message to the person that the relationship is over. Do not be ambivalent.
- Attempt to avoid all contact with the stalker.
- Keep an accurate journal of all incidents such as, sighting (include date and time), contacts, phone calls, written correspondence, and unusual incidents that may be connected.
- Keep all letters, packages and taped phone messages.
- Trace all phone calls per telephone company instructions.
- Inform family, friends, neighbors, managements, co-workers and workplace security. Have them notify you or the police if they are contacted or followed by the stalker.
- Be careful about your surroundings when alone.

I THINK I'M THE VICTIM OF A HATE CRIME?

A hate crime is defined as injuring another person; damaging another person's property; or threatening a specific person (or group of persons) and placing that person in reasonable fear of harm to person or property **because of** the perpetrator's perception of the victim's race, religion, ancestry, national origin, color, handicap (mental, physical, or sensory), sexual orientation, gender, marital status, age, parental status, political ideology, or gender identity. Even if a perpetrator is incorrect about a persons actual identity (race, religion, etc.), if they commit acts against a person based on their perception, these acts may still be considered a hate crime.

- Report the crime to police. (Call 9-1-1. If the immediate danger is over, call the non-emergency number (206) 625-5011.
- Explain to the officer why you believe the suspect assaulted you because of your race, religion, etc. and not because of some other reason (e.g. an argument regarding a traffic collision).
- Tell the officer the exact wording, or as much as you can remember, of what the perpetrator said to you, regardless of how offensive it is.
- **Call the Seattle Civil Rights Commission (206) 684-4500:** If you think you have been illegally discriminated against.

KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE

FAMILY RULES

Establishing a system of “family rules” about personal safety can be a good way to teach children to distinguish between safe and unsafe situations. Many families already have rules about bedtime, TV watching, chores, etc. By adopting rules about personal safety, parents can teach good habits through reinforcement and repetition without generating excessive fear. The following are suggestions for personal safety rules that can be incorporated into a family routine.

INSIDE RULES

- Kids should know their complete home address, telephone number including area code and parents’ first and last names.
- If kids are old enough to answer the phone, they should know how to call 9-1-1. Practice with the **receiver button taped down**.
- Kids should be taught never to reveal any personal (their name, school, age, etc.) or family information over the phone unless a parent has given permission.
- If kids are home alone and answer a phone call for an absent parent, they should say “she can’t come to the phone right now”, and take a message or tell the caller to try later – don’t make excuses, they sound phony.
- It’s okay not to answer the phone, or to work out a code (ring twice, hang up call again) so parent can check on a child that is home alone.
- Kids are old enough to answer the door when they are old enough to check the identity of the person at the door **WITHOUT** opening it. Kids should be taught to check the persons identity first, and only open the door to persons that have been approved by you.

OUTSIDE RULES

- Learn the full names of your kids’ friends, their parents’ names, addresses and phone numbers. Check to verify the accuracy if you get the information from your kids. When your child is at a friend’s home, find out who else is present. Parents? Older kids? Other neighbors? No one?
- Know your child’s routes to and from school, play and errands. Insist they stick to the same route – no shortcuts! If you have to look for them, you will know where to begin.
- Walk these routes with your child, and brainstorm nearby places that are good to approach (schools, stores, etc.) if they are ever bothered. Kids are reluctant to enter an unknown building unless given permission.
- Knocking on the door of a stranger should be the last resort. If they have no other choice they should look for a house with a light on (at night) or toys in the yard if possible. They should not go inside the house, but should tell the homeowner to “please call the police, someone is bothering me”.

- Kids should be taught never to go with anyone without your permission.
- Even if a child has permission to go somewhere or do something, they should be taught to get your permission a second time if the plans or situations change.
- Kids should never play in isolated areas of parks or playgrounds, and should avoid public restrooms, building sites and dark streets.
- Kids' best defenses are their voices and their legs. Teach them to run away from someone who is bothering them while yelling to attract as much attention as is possible. Have them practice yelling!
- Teach kids not to approach cars that stop to ask for help. Most legitimate adults would not ask a young child for directions anyway. If the car follows them or the driver gets out they should run away and yell.

“BAD GUY” RULES

- Society teaches kids bad guys are always ugly, mean and scary and they are usually portrayed as male strangers. Teach kids that “bad guys” can be anyone; they can act nice, be friendly and be attractive. Teach kids that a “bad guy” is anyone who asks them to violate family rules or asks them to keep secrets from their parents.
- Remember, a stranger is anyone who is not known by your child. A friend of parents, a friend of the child's friend or a neighbor can be a stranger.
- Some bad guys play tricks on kids. Typical bad guy tricks include bribes (money, toys, games, or promises of those things), lies (your mom told me to pick you up at school), requests for help (my puppy ran away, can you help me find him?), or threats (if you don't come with me I'll hurt your mom).

INTERNET RULES

- Kids should be taught to never give out or send personal information (photos, addresses, telephone numbers or location of your school) without your permission.
- If kids come across or are sent information online that makes them feel uncomfortable, they should tell you or a teacher, and never respond to that type of message.
- Kids should never agree to get together with someone they meet online without your prior knowledge and permission.

More information:

Parental education: www.theinternetandyourchild.org

Child education: www.netsmartz.org

ELDER SAFETY & ABUSE PREVENTION

ELDERS: AVOID FRAUDS AND SCAMS

Every year billions of dollars are lost to fraudulent activities. Scams are conducted over the telephone, by mail, the internet and door to door. The following are signs to help you recognize scams. (More information on identity theft is on page 7 of this booklet.)

- **Telephone Scams:** If a telemarketer requires an immediate response, won't let you get off the phone, or won't provide their information to you, they are most likely not legitimate. If this happens, don't worry about being rude, just hang up! Never give out your credit card number unless you initiated the call.
- **Internet Scams:** Don't reply to spam messages on the internet, it is better to delete them without opening. Replying lets them know your account is active. Only use a secure online web form to provide your credit card number or other personal information to any business, never include this in an email. Scammers can make their email addresses look like a legitimate business.
- **Door-to-door:** Beware of people offering to make home repairs. A common scam is to bid on a job, complete a small portion and demand money to finish of the job. Once the money is paid, they leave without finishing the job.
- **Contests, Prizes and Limited Offers:** Be especially cautious if you have been "selected" rather than entering the contest. Beware of anyone claiming, "you won't get another opportunity like this", or requiring you to pay them money before you can "claim your prize," even if they promise you will get it back.
- **Caretaker:** Sadly, caregivers, whether family, friend or hired, can sometimes be tempted to take advantage of the person they are entrusted to care for. financially. Monitor your mail and bank statements. Watch for "missing" mail, or the withholding of bank statements.

HOW TO REPORT ELDER ABUSE

If you are a friend or relative of an elder who needs part or fulltime care, please watch for the most common types of elder abuse:

- **Physical/Sexual** - May be indicated by injuries (cuts, bruises), difficulty walking or sitting.
- **Psychological** - May be indicated by withdrawal or fearful behavior.
- **Financial** - May be indicated when family members, friends or caregivers from an agency are suddenly involved in personal money matters without clear consent.
- **Neglect/Abandonment** - May be indicated by poor hygiene, poor provision of nutritional needs, and/or residential homes in severe disrepair.

To report suspected abuse of an elder in a private/residential setting:

Adult Protective Services: 1-866-221-4909 or 1-866 END HARM (363-4276).

To report suspected abuse of an elder in a private facility or institutional setting:

Residential Care Services: 1-800-562-6078.

PERSONAL EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Although no one wants to think about a natural or man-made disaster occurring, emergency preparedness experts tell us that the question is not one of “if” but “when” we will experience some type of disaster. Given that, a little planning can make all the difference in the world when that happens.

Water: Store a minimum of three gallons of water per person (one gallon per person per day, for three days). Use clean, food-grade plastic containers, such as two-liter soda pop bottles.

Food: Store at least a 3-day supply of food for people and pets. Choose foods that are nutritious, require minimum preparation, and are items you normally eat.

USING FOOD IN THE RIGHT ORDER

- First, use perishable foods, including those in the refrigerator. (If you have frozen water containers in the freezer, move them into the fridge to help keep the temperature cool.)
- Second, use frozen foods from the freezer.
- Third, use canned and dried foods.

CRITICAL SUPPLIES

- Include a 3-day supply of prescription medicines and an extra pair of eyeglasses and contact lenses with your regular first aid supplies.
- AM battery-operated radio and extra batteries
- ABC fire extinguisher
- Manual can opener
- Supplies for any who have special needs, such as baby or medical supplies.

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE ELECTRICITY:

Staying Warm: Plan to have all household members sleep in the same room. Close off rooms that aren't being used to conserve heat. Use sleeping bags and blankets, even during daylight hours, for extra warmth. Before using a fireplace after an earthquake, have your chimney and flue inspected for cracks. Sparks may escape through a small crack and start a fire in the wall or attic.

Lighting: In addition to flashlights, you can use lightsticks which can be purchased at camping supply and hardware stores. Lightsticks provide light from 30 minutes to 12 hours. Store lightsticks and batteries in the freezer to extend their shelf life.

Cooking: Never use cooking equipment designed for outdoor use inside – this could lead to carbon monoxide poisoning.

CALLING 9-1-1

CALL EMERGENCY 9-1-1 WHEN:

- When you have a Police, Fire or Medical emergency.
- To report a crime that is in progress, or has just occurred.
- There is a situation that could, or does, pose a danger to life, property, or both.
- There is suspicious activity involving a Person(s), or Vehicle, that appears criminal in intent.

Please Note: Seattle Police 9-1-1 calltakers have immediate access to interpreters, who can assist them in communicating with callers, and TTY machines at every station. If you are outside the city and need to report an emergency that is occurring in the city limits call (206) 583-2111.

9-1-1 calls from pay phones are free.

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU CALL 9-1-1:

Remain patient and calm while the 9-1-1 calltaker asks you questions. 9-1-1 calltakers are trained to ask specific questions to quickly determine what is wrong, and what type of assistance to send. Please stay on the line until the calltaker tells you to hang up. Be prepared to answer the following questions:

Where? Where did this occur? Did it happen on the street, inside, outside, in front or in back, etc.?

What? What happened?

When? How long ago did this occur? Is the event still in progress?

Weapons? Are there any weapons? Are drugs, or alcohol involved?

Additional questions that might be asked are:

- How many people are involved, and what ages?
- Are they on foot or in a vehicle?
- Personal Descriptions: Race/Sex/Age/Build Clothing. Operators will generally ask for a clothing description from top to bottom, and outside to inside.
- Vehicle Descriptions: Color/Year/Make/Model/License Plate Number and State.

THE SEATTLE POLICE NON EMERGENCY LINE: (206) 625-5011

Reasons for calling the non-emergency number include, but are not limited to the following:

- You want to report a nuisance, such as a noise or parking complaint.
- To report a non-emergency crime, one that did not just occur, and the suspect(s) are not in the immediate area.
- You have questions about something suspicious occurring in your neighborhood, and you are not sure it is criminal activity.